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ABSTRACT

The Special Labor Force Report shows a substantial rise in the labor force participation rates of married women and single and divorced persons. Also explored is the downward trend of married men (55 years old or over) as members of the labor force. This decline was due mainly to early retirements and to some extent to a rising incidence of reported disability. The report notes a rise in the labor force participation of multiple worker families but not of women heads of households. These findings were compiled from the annual nationwide survey of marital and family characteristics of workers in the population 16 years old and over. Appended to the report are statistical tables and charts. (BP)

SUMMARY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Bureau of Labor Statistics
SPECIAL LABOR FORCE REPORT

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# Marital and Family Characteristics of Workers, March 1974

Of the substantial 2.4 million rise in the labor force between March 1973 and March 1974, nearly half (47 percent) were single persons, 27 percent were divorced persons, and 23 percent were married women. Married men did not figure at all in the increase, as their labor force held steady over the year at 39.7 million. The number of married women in the work force rose by 550,000 to 20.4 million, or nearly three-fifths of all working women. Employment growth, or lack of it in some cases, corresponded with the changes in the labor force, and the jobless numbers and rates in all marital groups were not significantly changed over the year. (See table 1.)

Recent labor force increases among single persons are mostly due to the large number of post-World War II children who are now in the 20-to-29 age bracket where labor force participation rates are substantially higher than for teenagers. Since 1970, the labor force participation rate for single men has advanced from 61 to 67 percent; for single women, it has advanced from 53 to 57 percent. The increasing prominence of divorced persons in the labor force largely reflects their growth in the population. In 1973 and early 1974, the divorce rate hit the highest level ever recorded in the United States.

The labor force participation rate of married men continued its long-term decline, slipping to 84 percent in March 1974. This decline, as in the past, was concentrated among husbands 55 years old and over, due mainly to early retirement and to some extent to a rising incidence of reported disability. The rate for men 45 to 54 also is beginning to drift downward.

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Over the year, the labor force participation rate of married women continued to trend upward, reaching 43 percent. (See table 2.) Since 1970, the rate for wives with children under 3 has climbed 5 percentage points to 31 percent; rates for married women with older children or no children under 18 have increased more slowly.

In line with the rising labor force participation of married women, the number of multiple-worker families has also risen. In March 1974, there were about 22.5 million husband-wife families that had other family members (usually the wife) in addition to the husband in the labor force. This number represented 57 percent of all husband-wife families in which the head was in the labor force. (See table 3.)

The number of women who were family heads totaled 6.8 million in March 1974. Their labor force participation rate, at 54 percent, was higher than that of wives, but has remained little changed for many years.

These findings are from the annual survey of marital and family characteristics of workers in the population 16 years old and over. The survey was conducted in March 1974 for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. Additional information on this subject will be published in a forthcoming issue of the Monthly Labor Review.

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Table 1. Employment status of persons 16 years old and over, by marital status, sex, and race, March 1973 and 1974

(Numbers in thousands)

| Marital status, sex, and race | March 1973 | | | | | | March 1974 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total population | Labor force | | | | | Total population | Labor force | | | | |
| | | Total 1/ | | | Unemployed | | | Total 1/ | | | Unemployed | |
| | | Number | Percent of population | Employed | Number | Percent of labor force | | Number | Percent of population | Employed | Number | Percent of labor force |
| ALL PERSONS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 146,290 | 88,303 | 60.4 | 82,820 | 4,504 | 5.1 | 148,898 | 90,691 | 60.9 | 84,877 | 4,756 | 5.2 |
| Men | 69,350 | 54,399 | 78.4 | 50,895 | 2,525 | 4.6 | 70,767 | 55,371 | 78.2 | 51,678 | 2,635 | 4.8 |
| Married, wife present | 46,939 | 39,782 | 84.8 | 37,822 | 1,110 | 2.8 | 47,324 | 39,718 | 83.9 | 37,681 | 1,125 | 2.8 |
| Married, wife absent | 1,733 | 1,370 | 79.1 | 1,254 | 87 | 6.4 | 1,753 | 1,405 | 80.1 | 1,292 | 84 | 6.1 |
| Widowed | 1,924 | 607 | 31.5 | 586 | 20 | 3.3 | 1,854 | 642 | 34.6 | 618 | 24 | 3.7 |
| Divorced | 1,963 | 1,538 | 78.4 | 1,425 | 103 | 6.7 | 2,335 | 1,869 | 80.0 | 1,737 | 121 | 6.5 |
| Single | 16,791 | 11,102 | 66.1 | 9,808 | 1,205 | 10.9 | 17,501 | 11,737 | 67.1 | 10,350 | 1,281 | 10.9 |
| Women | 76,850 | 33,904 | 44.1 | 31,925 | 1,979 | 5.8 | 78,131 | 35,320 | 45.2 | 33,199 | 2,121 | 6.0 |
| Married, husband present | 46,939 | 19,821 | 42.2 | 18,908 | 913 | 4.6 | 47,324 | 20,367 | 43.0 | 19,406 | 961 | 4.7 |
| Married, husband absent | 2,902 | 1,522 | 52.4 | 1,367 | 155 | 10.2 | 2,975 | 1,642 | 55.2 | 1,473 | 169 | 10.3 |
| Widowed | 9,854 | 2,484 | 25.2 | 2,394 | 90 | 3.6 | 9,814 | 2,434 | 24.8 | 2,319 | 115 | 4.7 |
| Divorced | 3,276 | 2,338 | 71.4 | 2,216 | 122 | 5.2 | 3,629 | 2,647 | 72.9 | 2,521 | 126 | 4.7 |
| Single | 13,879 | 7,739 | 55.8 | 7,040 | 699 | 9.0 | 14,387 | 8,230 | 57.2 | 7,480 | 750 | 9.0 |
| NEGRO AND OTHER RACES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 16,648 | 9,960 | 59.8 | 9,002 | 872 | 8.8 | 17,206 | 10,286 | 59.8 | 9,203 | 948 | 9.2 |
| Men | 7,582 | 5,533 | 73.0 | 5,024 | 423 | 7.6 | 7,849 | 5,774 | 73.6 | 5,100 | 539 | 9.3 |
| Married, wife present | 3,827 | 3,237 | 84.6 | 3,037 | 128 | 4.0 | 3,996 | 3,337 | 83.5 | 3,049 | 173 | 5.2 |
| Married, wife absent | 572 | 433 | 75.7 | 401 | 22 | 5.1 | 571 | 436 | 76.4 | 411 | 21 | 4.6 |
| Widowed | 353 | 131 | 37.1 | 123 | 8 | 6.1 | 327 | 120 | 36.7 | 117 | 3 | 2.5 |
| Divorced | 280 | 205 | 73.2 | 191 | 13 | 6.3 | 347 | 270 | 77.8 | 256 | 12 | 4.4 |
| Single | 2,550 | 1,527 | 59.9 | 1,272 | 252 | 16.5 | 2,608 | 1,611 | 61.8 | 1,267 | 330 | 20.5 |
| Women | 9,006 | 4,427 | 48.8 | 3,978 | 449 | 10.1 | 9,357 | 4,512 | 48.2 | 4,103 | 409 | 9.0 |
| Married, husband present | 3,877 | 2,093 | 54.0 | 1,952 | 141 | 6.7 | 4,027 | 2,100 | 52.1 | 1,953 | 147 | 6.9 |
| Married, husband absent | 1,122 | 546 | 48.7 | 477 | 69 | 12.6 | 1,139 | 617 | 54.2 | 547 | 70 | 11.4 |
| Widowed | 1,292 | 369 | 28.6 | 356 | 13 | 3.5 | 1,317 | 375 | 28.5 | 357 | 18 | 4.8 |
| Divorced | 516 | 366 | 70.9 | 337 | 29 | 7.9 | 549 | 394 | 71.8 | 377 | 17 | 4.3 |
| Single | 2,259 | 1,053 | 46.6 | 856 | 197 | 18.7 | 2,325 | 1,026 | 44.1 | 869 | 157 | 15.2 |

1/ The male labor force includes members of the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post.

Table 2. Labor force participation rates 1/ of married women, husband present, by presence and age of children, March 1960-1974

| Year | All wives | No children under 18 years | With children under 18 years | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Total | 6 to 17 years only | Under 6 years | | |
| | | | | | Total | 3 to 5 years, none under 3 years | Under 3 years |
| 1960 | 30.5 | 34.7 | 27.6 | 39.0 | 18.6 | 25.1 | 15.3 |
| 1961 | 32.7 | 37.3 | 29.6 | 41.7 | 20.0 | 25.5 | 17.0 |
| 1962 | 32.7 | 36.1 | 30.3 | 41.8 | 21.3 | 27.2 | 18.2 |
| 1963 | 33.7 | 37.4 | 31.2 | 41.5 | 22.5 | 28.5 | 19.4 |
| 1964 | 34.4 | 37.8 | 32.0 | 40.3 | 22.7 | 26.7 | 20.5 |
| 1965 | 34.7 | 38.3 | 32.2 | 42.7 | 23.3 | 29.2 | 20.0 |
| 1966 | 35.4 | 38.4 | 33.2 | 43.7 | 24.2 | 29.1 | 21.2 |
| 1967 | 36.8 | 38.9 | 35.3 | 45.0 | 26.5 | 31.7 | 23.3 |
| 1968 | 38.3 | 40.1 | 36.9 | 46.9 | 27.6 | 34.0 | 23.4 |
| 1969 | 39.6 | 41.0 | 38.6 | 48.6 | 28.5 | 34.7 | 24.2 |
| 1970 | 40.8 | 42.2 | 39.7 | 49.2 | 30.3 | 37.0 | 25.8 |
| 1971 | 40.8 | 42.1 | 39.7 | 49.4 | 29.6 | 36.1 | 25.7 |
| 1972 | 41.5 | 42.7 | 40.5 | 50.2 | 30.1 | 36.1 | 26.9 |
| 1973 | 42.2 | 42.8 | 41.7 | 50.1 | 32.7 | 38.3 | 29.4 |
| 1974 | 43.0 | 43.0 | 43.1 | 51.2 | 34.4 | 39.1 | 31.0 |

1/ Labor force as percent of population.

Table 3. Employment status of family head and other family members, by race, March 1972-1974

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| Employment status and relationship to head | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | All families | White | Negro and other races |
| **HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES** | | | | | |
| Total families (thousands) | 45,752 | 46,314 | 46,810 | 42,894 | 3,916 |
| Head in labor force: Number (thousands) | 39,116 | 39,298 | 39,312 | 36,053 | 3,259 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Wife or other member in labor force | 54.6 | 55.7 | 57.2 | 56.6 | 63.7 |
| Wife only | 35.1 | 36.0 | 37.4 | 36.8 | 45.0 |
| Wife and other member | 9.9 | 9.8 | 9.9 | 9.8 | 10.9 |
| Other member only | 9.6 | 9.9 | 9.8 | 10.0 | 7.8 |
| Neither wife nor other member in labor force | 45.4 | 44.3 | 42.8 | 43.4 | 36.3 |
| **Head Employed 1/** | | | | | |
| Total: Number (thousands) | 37,855 | 38,247 | 38,252 | 35,154 | 3,098 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Wife or other member in labor force | 54.5 | 55.7 | 57.2 | 56.5 | 64.3 |
| Wife only | 34.9 | 35.9 | 37.4 | 36.7 | 45.4 |
| Wife and other member | 9.9 | 9.9 | 9.9 | 9.8 | 11.1 |
| Other member only | 9.7 | 9.9 | 9.9 | 10.0 | 7.8 |
| Neither wife nor other member in labor force | 45.5 | 44.3 | 42.8 | 43.5 | 35.7 |
| **Head Unemployed** | | | | | |
| Total: Number (thousands) | 1,261 | 1,051 | 1,060 | 899 | 161 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Wife or other member in labor force | 56.5 | 55.6 | 56.7 | 57.7 | 50.9 |
| Wife only | 40.6 | 40.6 | 39.3 | 39.6 | 37.3 |
| Wife and other member | 7.5 | 7.8 | 8.4 | 8.9 | 5.6 |
| Other member only | 8.3 | 7.1 | 9.1 | 9.2 | 8.1 |
| Neither wife nor other member in labor force | 43.5 | 44.4 | 43.4 | 42.3 | 49.1 |
| **FAMILIES WITH FEMALE HEAD** | | | | | |
| Total families (thousands) | 6,184 | 6,600 | 6,798 | 4,847 | 1,951 |
| Head in labor force: Number (thousands) | 3,288 | 3,510 | 3,679 | 2,725 | 954 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Other member in labor force | 38.5 | 35.8 | 35.2 | 37.8 | 27.9 |
| No other member in labor force | 61.5 | 64.2 | 64.8 | 62.2 | 72.1 |
| **Head Employed** | | | | | |
| Total: Number (thousands) | 3,062 | 3,274 | 3,443 | 2,576 | 867 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Other member in labor force | 39.1 | 36.6 | 35.6 | 38.3 | 27.6 |
| No other member in labor force | 60.9 | 63.4 | 64.4 | 61.7 | 72.4 |
| **Head Unemployed** | | | | | |
| Total: Number (thousands) | 226 | 236 | 236 | 149 | 87 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Other member in labor force | 31.0 | 24.8 | 29.5 | 29.1 | 30.2 |
| No other member in labor force | 69.0 | 75.2 | 70.5 | 70.9 | 69.8 |

1/ Includes members of the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post.

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